

# THE MIRAGE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., JANUARY 2, 1888.

## A Plea for the Health of the City.

To the Local Physicians and the Board of Health.

As my letter to the Interstate and Foreign Convention of Physicians did not reach its destiny because of the Washington *Post*, I take this opportunity of addressing the local doctors as to what I think they ought to have done when the convention was here and in a way to aid them. Having so rare an opportunity they ought to have sought for the citizens of the District every benefit that could better be reached through the influence and opinion of the interstate physicians, they being equally in need of pure air for their state representatives, the statesmen, &c., with their families and the families of those gentlemen who accompany and follow them for local purposes. The city could have been much improved by a little forethought. Had they had an expression of opinion from the convention, collectively, that purer air would prove a national blessing, each member for his own and his constituents' sake would vote an appropriation sufficient to bury every infectious germ adjacent to the city through either sewerage excrement or marshy malarial vegetation. As thorough an investigation of the infectious surroundings as the beautified parts have had would have added to the appeal, of the interstate that of the foreign scientific gentlemen; force, that the Government would earlier respect. However, it is enough that their attention is drawn to it. Their duty to their constituents in the care they have for their representatives' health should be enough, themselves, the objects most interested, to have what can be done, to that purpose done, as rapidly as possible. Not a breath of pure air reaches the Capital City, the houses of Congress, courts, or departments that does not come from the north. The other three points are loaded with germ infection, &c., in an almost complete circle of the city, which wafts with every breeze disease and death thereto. From every point of the compass, with the exception noted, we have a varied supply of fever germs, &c. From the Anacostia Island or the old aqueduct bridge, down the Potomac to the east branch, and up that marsh-bound river to the northern boundary; yes, further following the river to Bladensburg, from that stretch of marsh and that particular point, we receive all the river-border effluvia into the city. From northeast, by southwest to northwest, we are continually inhaling the pestiferous atmosphere of that circuit. A deposit of sum portion of the surplus, so much talked about, might be religiously expended there. Thus all the malarial-breeding marsh would be transformed into truck garden convenience, making valuable land, at the same time destroying every river source of infection, crowding the river bed to the eastern bank, leaving sufficient space for freshets, with a levy sufficiently strong for the B. & O. Railroad to enter the city through the tunnel already complete. There would be economy in the end, no street crossings, less accidents, with less danger to the citizen and the passenger. We have in addition to the natural marsh malarial series of sewerage from Rock Creek surrounding the city from northwest to northeast: First, those of Rock Creek; then along the Potomac with the Tiber spanning a full half-mile high, effluvia. Next, the foul effluvia of an open sewer but in course of construction, between the Anacostia bridge and the Congressional Cemetery. Again, the large sewer extensively open east of the jail, between the latter and Benning's Bridge, the boundary sewer from the northwest. The marsh vegetation, miasma, &c., blended with that of the sewerage, produces the most dangerous infection. But when the marshy vegetation becomes loaded and unloaded by the ebb and flow of the tide, then dried by the air and carried into the city on the wings of the coveted breeze, it becomes doubly dangerous. To open the windows of a house at any point but the north is to invite the sewer germs of disease from pest-house and hospital. It is akin to opening the front door and windows of a street-car to admit pure air. She who finds it there is of an explorative imagination, as she gets but the effluvia—the aroma of the steam and exhalation, &c., of the cheaply-fed dyspeptic horses. The paper pulp and other floating particles of matter which cling to marshy vegetation dry and wing their way on the coveted draft to doubtfully air the house, filling every curtain and crevice with escaped germs of hospital sewerage, representatives of every disease the hospital contains. With the Mount Vernon avenue a fact and the suburban possibilities perfected, the National Capital would then truly compare with the cities of any other nation. The city should be graded by the Government, not only the streets and avenues, but the main surface. Place the mounds in the low and on the marshy places, and health there would be assured and the new and improved lands made valuable in degree, commensurate with the expense. There is not a family in the nation that would not voluntarily contribute their quota, did the walk over it as we have done, and grasp the benefits that must accrue through the enterprise. It is the duty of the representative to the constituent, that his own health be preserved, and his faculties used while here for their interests to the best advantage. The representative should weigh it, the constituents should demand it. What a trifling per capita! Had each family the items in bill form they would ask it received as readily as they would their grocery bills. Ask Congress for the improvements; it will most assuredly grant it. Washington city should be the pride of every citizen.

It must doubtless seem apparent audacity in me to contend with a pastor for befitting language in a temple and on an altar of the *Most High*. In an affix to this article, my review of Pastor Power's sermon, I shall give my views briefly and explicitly on the relationship of man to God. The teachings of the overzealous are so strangely mixed, they have every terrace or grade from the spiritual babe to manhood, and from that to old age, twisted into a cable of so many irregular parts in the one high standard that it weakens the strength of the whole.

## One Woman's Opinion.

To the Editor of the Post: Will you permit me, though not a resident of Washington, to take exception to the communication written over the signature of C. H. A. in the *Post* of Saturday? It has been my experience that the real true women in public life have been able at all times and places to hold their own since the broadening of woman's sphere.

I think the result from the election of women on school boards would be very much as it was in Chicago when the well-bred men decided to reclaim the parquet of the Opera House from the roughs who had held it to the discomfort of every one else. They simply went in evening dress and were well-mannered, and the former, finding themselves out of place, disappeared from that part of the house.

M. G. L.

WASHINGTON, D. C. 24.

The broadening of woman's sphere, to our view, unconsciously doubtless, have placed many a daughter in the position indirectly of a rival to her brother and father, thus reducing the aggregate of wages coming to the family; the male members being compelled to labor on a grade beneath their acquirements. But as an offset to women performing men's labor bachelor marriageable men should pay a celibacy tax of one hundred dollars handicap per year in order to equalize the benedict's burden of a family, the married man having the preference, the taxable one second, and he of the untaxable age third and last. The married man labors under a great disadvantage, and he should have the sympathy of all employers.

In the second paragraph the incident of the Opera House was an unhappy precedent for the amiable, wifely, motherly portion of the sex; and they are its only true representatives. They are not of the Amazon quality and would not for any consideration be found in such a place. The amiable, modest lady all men admire; the overmasculine they tolerate, but abhor; hence, the exit of the roughs.

## An Open Letter to the International Convention of Physicians.

GENTLEMEN: Is it not the opportune moment while so many of you eminent physicians are convened together to ask your opinion relative to the full nature and functions of human blood? The relationship of blood to health is not clearly understood, and many, very many valuable lives have been sacrificed through empiricism, presumably not thorough knowledge. Would it not be well to thoroughly understand that within our reach before reaching beyond to mystic matters, new fruit of our own misunderstandings? Blood without proper regulation as to quantity is accredited more power, I assert, than belongs to it justly. It is said to be the life; if so, or even the first principle, how is it that it is confined to veins and arteries, &c.? The ducts that confine it must be as old if not older than itself. If functionally only when within the veins, &c., it can scarcely be the parent of the vessels in which it is confined. If outside a vein or artery and not within some avenue to an outlet has it not then become detrimental, an intruder astray? While it has much to do in producing itself, yet it cannot be both parent and offspring. Is not plethoric blood similar to slickings in a mining sluice-way or a sluggish stream in a crooked outlet? Does not the proper quantity aid in readjusting the quality and regulating, too, the circulation? Pure or impure, too much or too little, deranges its action. If the largest proportion of blood is water no injury could follow release from the extreme extension the organs are subjected to by its pressure. Would not bleeding, as in the Brooklyn cases of sunstroke noted to the credit of Dr. L. Wedekind, prevent illness in all cases occasioned by surplus blood? Would it not also as an ally to preventives prove equally beneficial as an auxiliary to remedial medicines? Surplus blood and the source of it is the very mainspring of the new diseases now perplexing the profession. The present practice, non-bleeding, implies that the *Most High* was in error in exacting so much periodically from the opposite sex. Does not blood letting purify proportionately with the room it affords? Was not the change from so much bleeding to the ban put upon it too radical? Fatal consequences through the imperfect, unexplored mysterious action and functions of the blood falls most frequently upon men of distinction—brain laborers—statesmen, &c. The lance has more than an auxiliary relationship to remedial medicine. It is neater and more speedy than the troublesome process of cathartics, while the operation is less painful than the prick of a dull pin. We would not have you think of it as a remedy, but we know it to be a powerful auxiliary in any plathoric patient. Notwithstanding all that has been done in the aggregate towards progress in the elevation of human suffering there yet remains a mountain of mystery unexplored. The undertakers' records show palpably there is much yet to be learned. The aged must die, while to many of the young and medium aged do die. Blood grafted by the lance and remedial medicines have no inflammatory nest mucous for infinitesimals of any class in which to propagate. Surplus blood, the consequences of superabundant nutrition with inactivity, I am now sure you will admit is the cause of a large proportion of the deaths so numerously reported. I differ much with the two otherwise eminent physicians, Dr. Semmola and Flint. To burden the stomach when out of order with preparations substituting its functions as the latter infers is to kill the microba, as the former humorously asserts by first killing the patient. There is not much science in dueling the sense of feeling by narcotics; it is simply allowing the disease and nature to fight it out. If the disease conquers the undertaker gets the patient with a beautiful description of the treatment; if nature wins science has won a victory.

DR. ALEX. DUNBAR.

ALL but his clothes depends upon a man himself, on his intrinsic quality, his breeding, his manners, for the better a man is dressed the better he may exhibit the defects of his training. He may not live up to or outrival his clothes.